

VISION : INNOVATIVE OPTIONS FOR GIBSONS

The crisis of our century is embedded in survival and exchange systems that humankind has developed, which are not synchronous with natural systems. Through the unequal distribution of biological and economic resources, current North American systems tend to undermine the physical conditions upon which they are predicated. On the scale of town planning and development, it is our proposition that a reintegration of environment and economy be approached. Planning policy and urban design can be oriented towards biological and economic recovery without undermining citizens' quality of life. The following plan for Gibsons – a town whose population is expected to double in less than half a century – attempts to demonstrate this concept in a number of ways.

Gibsons began as a pioneer's outpost, and developed as a resource frontier of migrant workers and independent families. Now it has become a different kind of frontier as ex-urbanites seek new lifestyles and environmental amenities on the Sunshine Coast. Throughout, the town has maintained its independent spirit. Our design respects this identity, allowing for diverse choices and diverse spaces that have a common responsibility to the physical environment in which they are situated. To this end, a series of patterns serve to guide the design and planning process and provide a framework for development as individuals seek identity and freedom, but are confronted with distinct human and physical landscapes.

Transportation Destination - Gibsons currently acts as the gateway to the rest of the coast. Create attractive stopping points to make Gibsons a destination rather than a way-point. Innovative infrastructure planning along with protected greenways and parks will make Gibsons a place to visit. Responding to and supporting this potential, a passenger ferry enables visitors and commuters access to the town directly from Vancouver.

Perforated Waterfront - Limiting waterfront accessibility prohibits enjoyment of the sea. Make the boundary permeable through developments out into the sea as well as those that visually connect the water further inland. Winegarden Park draws the seaside experience to the doorstep of a new civic center. Nearby residential developments offer the possibility of living on the waterfront, and houseboats allow homes on the water itself.

Street Hierarchy - Where a hierarchy of street scales does not exist, heavy traffic invades residential precincts and threatens pedestrian comfort and safety. In residential areas, narrow the streets and provide low lighting to slow traffic and encourage a comfortable human-scaled street. Use permeable paving and swales to maintain a rural streetscape and natural drainage. Indicate major thoroughfares with tree-lines avenues and car-scaled lighting, as shown on North Road.

Commercial Close to Residential - Sprawling suburban developments without nearby commercial areas create dependence on cars and fracture daily activities into distant and unconnected stops. Create small-scale commercial centers surrounded by medium density housing. These denser areas allow the maintenance of green buffers in the form of protected areas and rural residential lots.

Unstructured Commons - Part of the charm of non-urban places is the scattering of undeveloped lots and remnants of forests, where surprising pockets of nature remain despite human activity. In conjunction with manicured parks and trails, leave unstructured and unmarked places for serendipitous discovery and unplanned use by residents and visitors. These areas can be places of refuge and communion with nature as well as places to gather for picnics or bonfires.

Independent Infrastructure - Current systems dealing with power, water and sewage are reaching a critical point. Encourage new developments in the area to use independent infrastructure through advertisement of low development costs and municipal tax rebates.

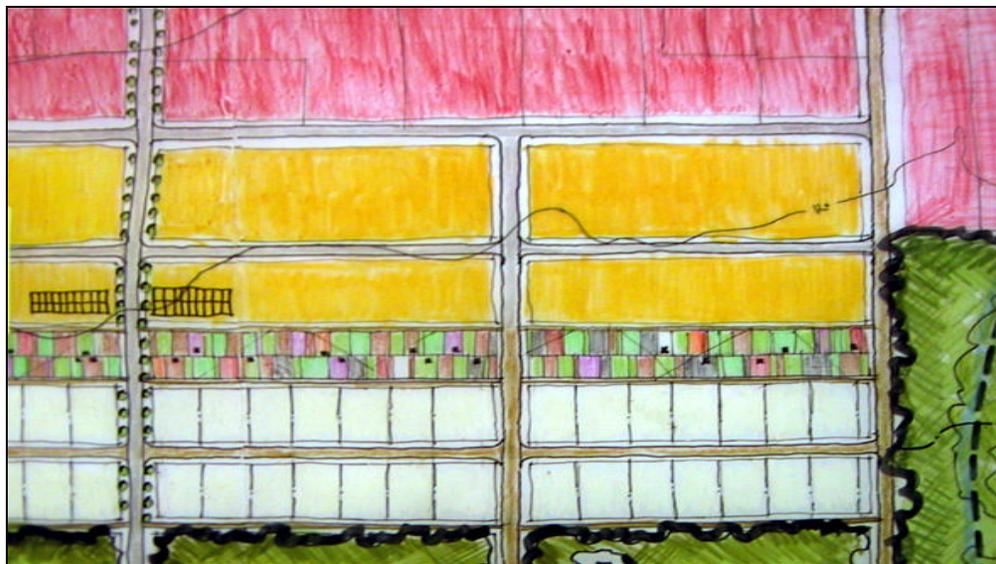
ILLUSTRATIVE PLAN





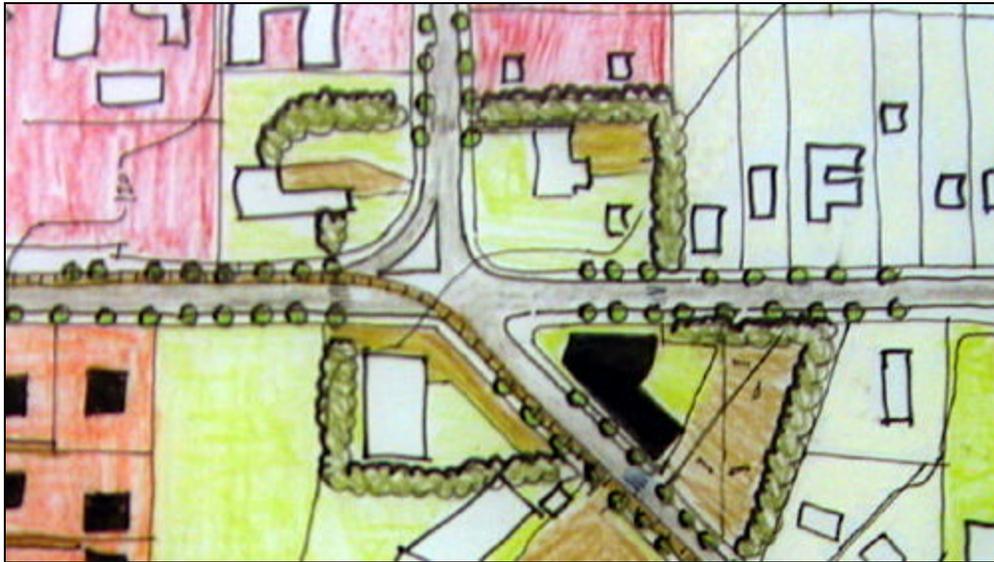
1. OFF-GRID BLOCKS

To protect the natural environment in which Gibsons is situated, any new developments in this area should function as a closed system, drawing only on renewable resources such as solar power, and expelling materials only in a useful or natural state, as with compost or clean water. Independent infrastructure not only cuts development costs, but decreases operating costs too – homeowners can sell excess private utilities back to BC Hydro. These independent infrastructural areas can look exactly the same as traditional neighbourhoods, or may take advantage of the freedom to be placed anywhere on any site.



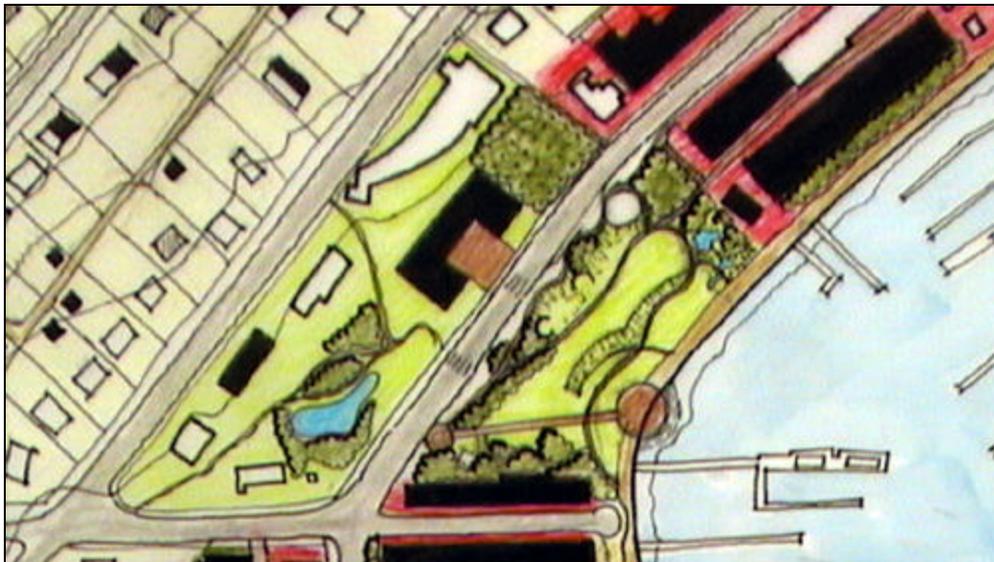
2. EXPERIENTIAL AND ECOLOGICAL BUFFERS

Graduated zoning from higher to lower density areas serves to form smaller centers separated from each other with green buffers. Rural residential lots of 2-4 acres provide large spans of natural green space, dividing a journey through this area into destinations rather than an endless series of houses. On the flatlands, they maintain a natural sponge required to support the water table. Near ravines, they filter water draining into creeks. Here, medium-density housing is close to amenities as well as their own community parks. Lower-density areas transition into very low density rural lots.



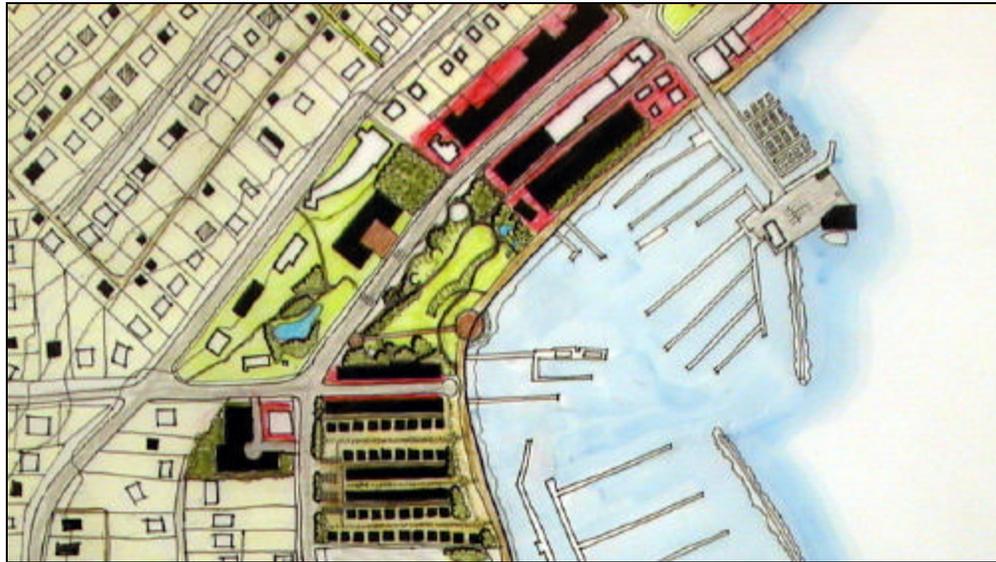
3. GATEWAY TO GIBSONS

Along North Road, arrival by car into Gibsons is predicated by a progression of regular street trees, which break open into a framed space at the corner of Hwy. 101 and School Road. This space highlights the existing restored historic buildings as well as a new art school replacing the mini-mall. While allowing highway traffic to continue west, the intersection alerts the driver of his arrival, forming a memorable gateway into Gibsons.



4. CIVIC SQUARE

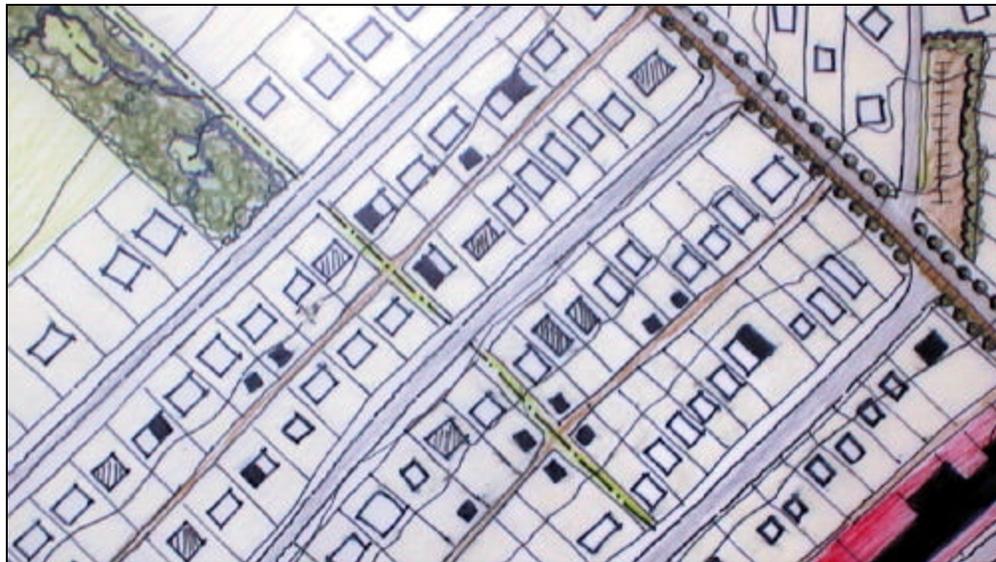
The place for a community center is not off in the woods, it is at the heart of the community, easily accessible by everyone. The new Gibsons Civic Center houses council chambers and a conference center while providing space for the public market. Winegarden Park acts as a classical setback, linking the building to the waterfront. Its grounds echo the landscaped park, bringing the library, museum and water pump to greater prominence within the larger space, as well as providing a catchment pond for the abundant water on the site. A dedicated shuttle line connects Upper Gibsons to the town center, while a passenger ferry provides a link to Vancouver from the waterfront pier.



5. WATERFRONT RESIDENCES

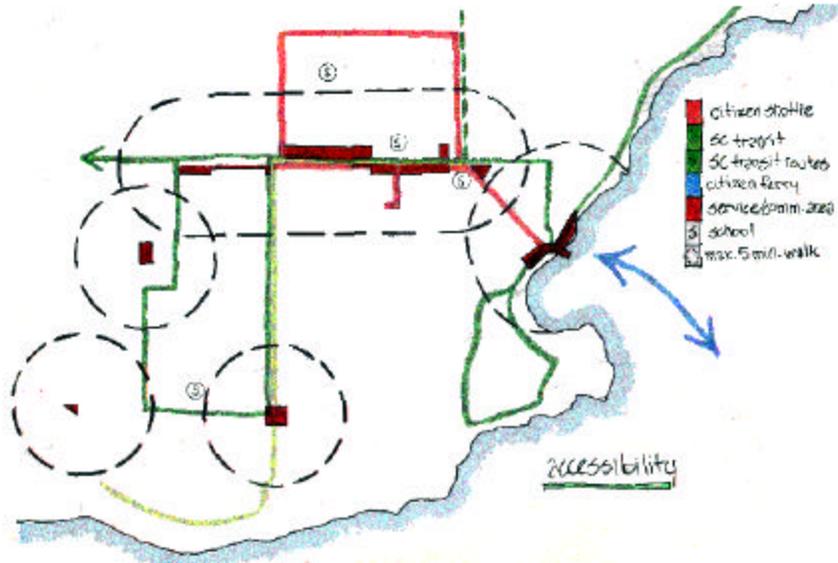
Part of energizing Lower Gibsons is the need to provide more residential options near the bustle of the waterfront area. Taking advantage of existing physical and social support networks, such a tightly-knit center can support aging in place and benefits other pedestrian oriented lifestyles.

- **A boathouse community**, with new private-access docks and nearby parking. Similar developments sell out quickly in Seattle and Vancouver.
- **Rooms with a view.** Two residential storeys above a commercial level along the North side of Gower Pt. Rd. allows great views for new residents and maintains them for houses uphill and behind.
- **Waterfront townhomes** transition between the busy town center and the cottage-style dwellings around the bay in the form of community-conscious, ecologically sensitive, freehold row houses on permeable lots.



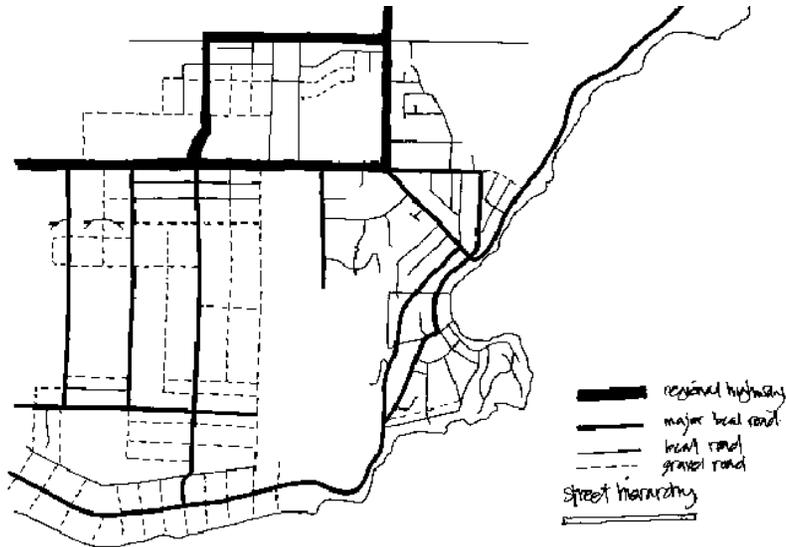
6. LOWER GIBSONS

Current owners benefit from increased residential demand in the form of zoning and bylaws encouraging profitable secondary suites. Starting at the waterfront, this pattern could easily be applied in other areas as demand increases. Homeowners may renovate to add **basement** or **garret apartments**, a separate **granny flat** or **garden cottage**, or can **duplex** their existing house.



1. ACCESSIBILITY

In addition to intensification of existing commercial zones in lower Gibsons and along Highway 101, our plan suggests three new commercial / service nodes in the Elphinstone district. This arrangement places amenities within a 5 minute walk of most residents. For longer journeys, transit and shuttle bus routes connect key locations within Gibsons and provide links to other regional centres.



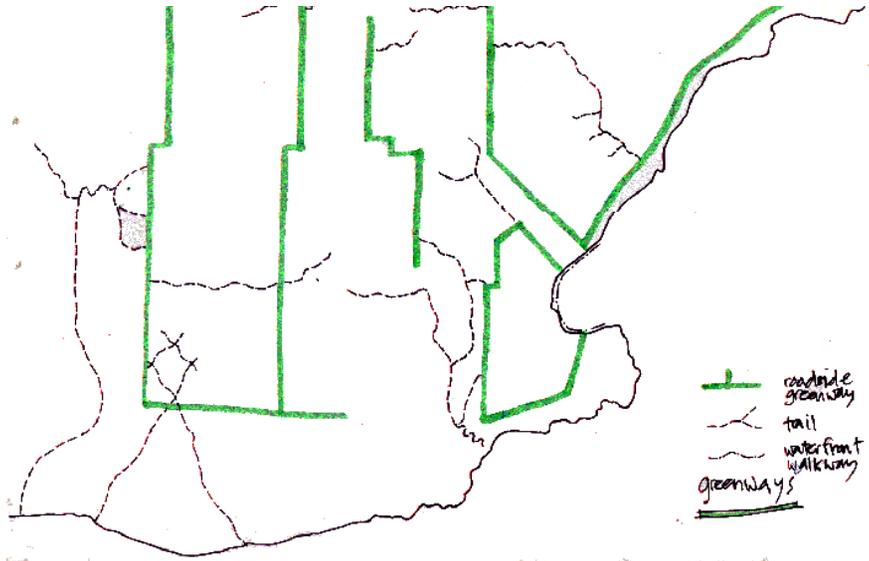
2. STREET HIERARCHY

The scale of streets is made legible through the use of paving standards, road width, lighting standards and street trees. By using these techniques to establish a clear street hierarchy, the danger of heavy traffic invading neighbourhoods is reduced. Streets become safer and more comfortable for all users.



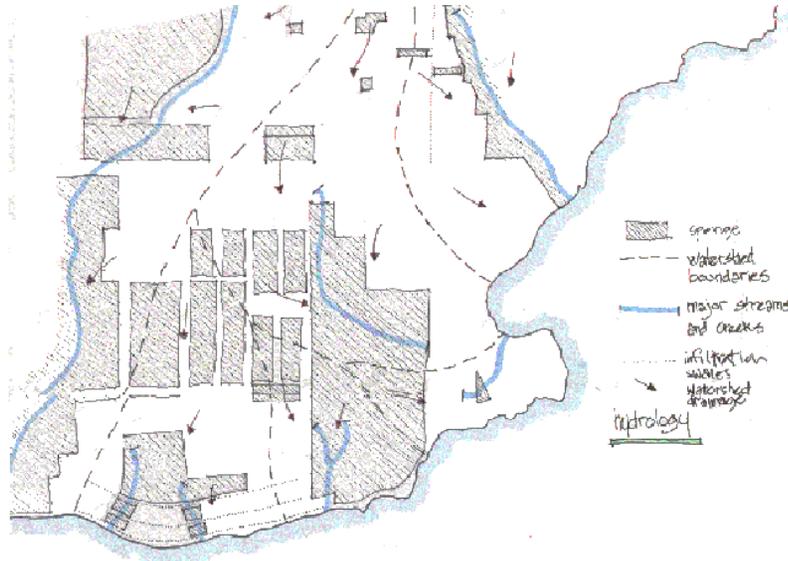
3. PARK HIERARCHY AND GREEN SPACES

Natural vegetation is retained in uninterrupted spaces near sensitive stream-side habitat areas. Gibsons, Charman and Chaster creeks are buffered. Rural residential zoning allows limited development with no services, and thus preserves a similarly verdant vegetation cover. Undesignated lots and organised greenspaces provide small pockets of natural and manicured vegetation in more densely settled areas.



4. GREENWAYS

In larger protected areas, forest trails offer residents and visitors opportunities for exploration and discovery in a natural setting. These areas are connected to community parks and service hubs through roadside greenways - dedicated lanes of asphalt and/or permeable paving for safe and convenient cycling and walking.



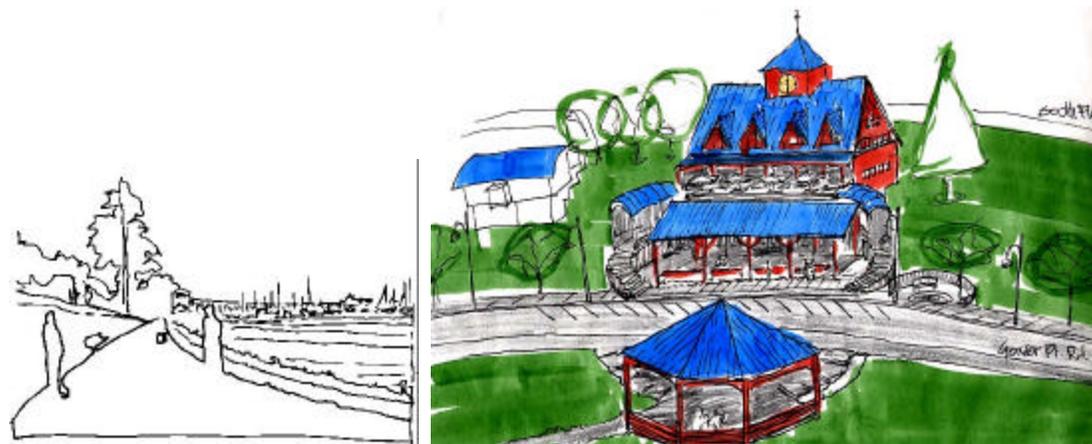
5. HYDROLOGY

The three major watersheds in the plan area are Chaster, Charman and Gibsons Creeks. Protected areas and rural residential zoning approximate natural infiltration rates, thus mitigating the effects of development in other areas. These features are particularly important during periods of high rainfall, when runoff from paved surfaces causes stream erosion and pollution.



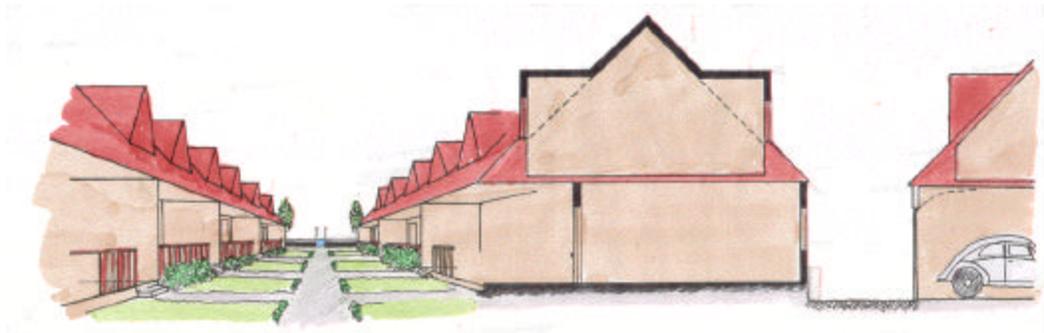
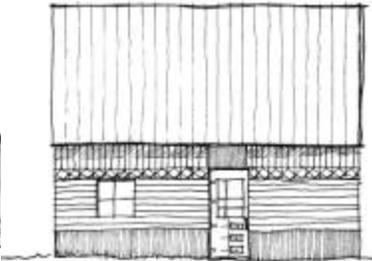
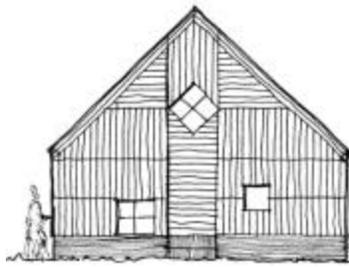
SECTIONAL PERSPECTIVE OF NORTH ROAD

This major road is narrowed to two lanes lined with regular street trees. This will slow the traffic somewhat while creating an axial movement down towards Gibsons. On the east side, swales collect and filter stormwater before releasing it into the creek. A wide, permeable sidewalk allows pedestrians and bikers plenty of space.



CIVIC SQUARE

The new Gibsons Civic Center, on Gower Point Road opposite Winegarden Park, is home to council chambers and can function as a conference center. A new icon of Gibsons, this new building will strengthen the wharf area as a town center. A civic square out front can be home to an expanded public market.

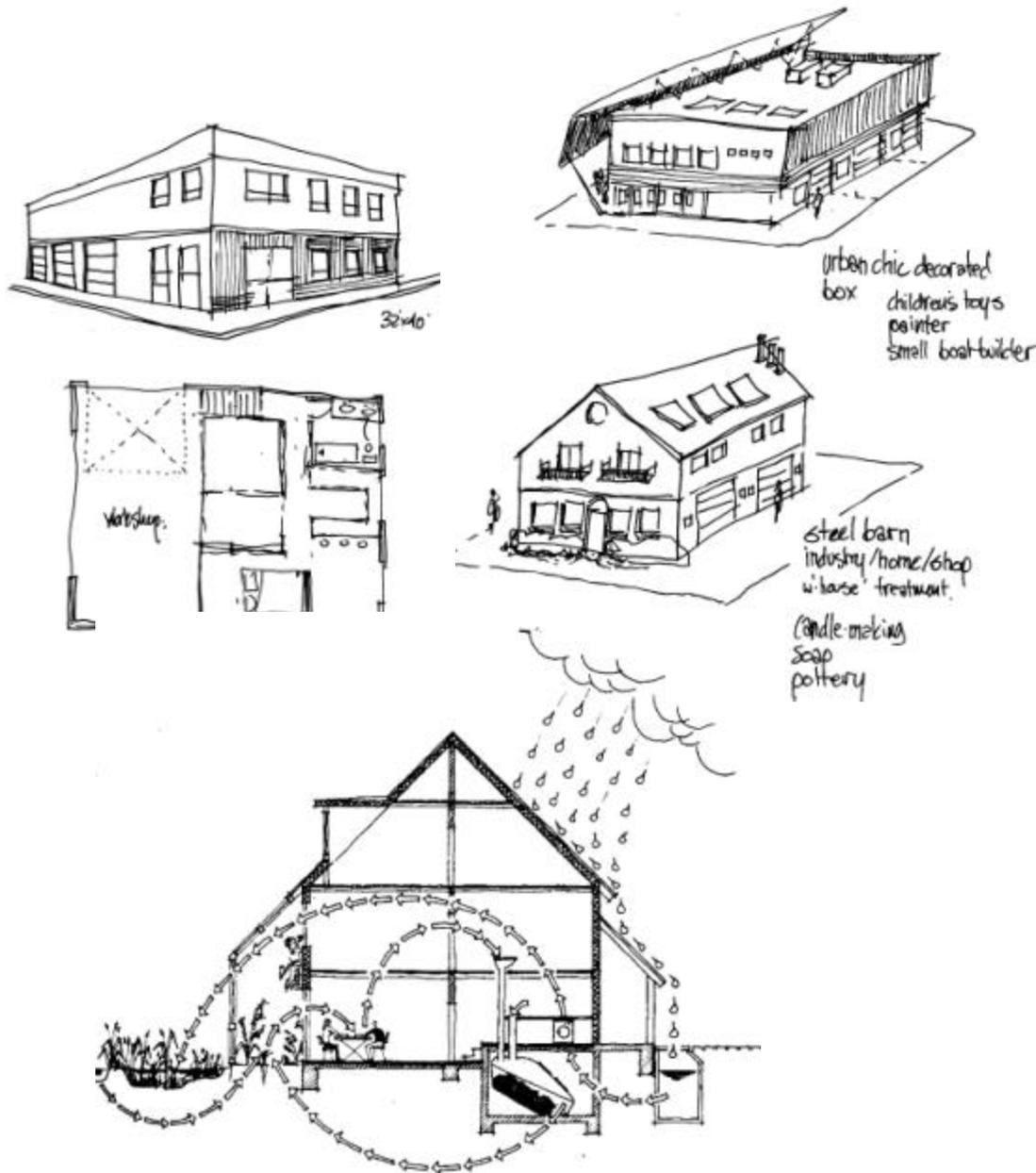


LOWER GIBSONS HOUSING OPTIONS

Harbourfront Houseboats – a funky, affordable alternative, at \$3k per slip annually, and providing up to 250 units, slip fees will pay for local infrastructure within the first four years and will pay dividends to the residents after the amortisation period. Infrastructure in this case would consist of a new pier for residents, typical resident facilities (as per any yacht club), wastewater treatment system, CoGen heat and electrical production with wind and solar backup.

Flexible Residential Zoning – will permit residents individual freedom for the development of their own lot, with respect to the addition of suites, granny flats, independent infrastructure, Bed and Breakfasts and workshops to their lots. Micro-Lots, typically 20' x 20' or 30' x 30' will be made available by existing residents or new subdivisions, provided they have their own independent infrastructure so as not to require an increase of municipal infrastructure capacity. This approach brings development costs to zero, save for where new lanes are required to access the lots or flats.

Waterfront Townhomes – a unique neighbourhood right on the waterfront, close to all the Lower Gibsons amenities. Facing each other across a wide green path, these gabled houses create a strong community feeling. Plenty of parking is available off gravel lanes as well as in a handy lot onsite off Gower Point Road. Groceries, pubs, community and health facilities are all within a two-minute walk. At the end of each row of houses, a promontory overlooks the waterfront, and leads down to the waterfront walkway with a few stairs.



RESIDENTIAL/LIGHT INDUSTRIAL

Areas off Highway 101 have been zoned for residential/light industrial use. These examples of live/work warehouse buildings are of the type one might find in the areas. The buildings could house small industry or large studio spaces as well as housing one to four families that use the space. Materials would reflect the industrial nature of the business, with large garage doors, corrugated metal roofing, etc. Large windows could advertise services within.

INDEPENDENT INFRASTRUCTURE

Rainwater and organic matter forms a cycle within the house. Independent infrastructure collects and purifies wastes and transforms them into useful materials. Rather than on the city-wide scale that we are most familiar with, these functions are performed on a household or neighbourhood scale, using communal greenhouse-style 'living machines'.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

A key strength of our plan is the flexibility it allows in response to the demands of population growth and ecological sensibility. If our suggestions are to be taken seriously in the context of Gibsons' independent spirit and desire for individual choices, we must enable a variety of design strategies that suit the numerous and sometimes conflicting priorities of present and future residents. Just as diversity is a critical concept in ecological integrity, the human landscape requires multiple identities. Public engagement thus becomes an integral aspect in the success of our propositions.

At one level, a form of participation is assumed simply through living, making everyday choices, dwelling in the place. In this sense, we propose that individuals and groups will be articulating their visions for the future even as they are existing in the present. Through flexible zoning and innovative options, citizens of Gibsons are given the opportunity to impose something of their values and priorities on the landscape.

To facilitate this engagement we suggest options. The *option*, for example, to add a duplex, granny flat or a secondary suit to existing units; the *option* to walk, cycle, or take transit to community amenities; the *option* to install a greywater system; the *option* to generate your own power or downsize your streets' lamp-standards. Specific municipal initiatives will create precedents for the possibilities implied by these options, without imposing strict regulatory controls.

For instance, development costs of a proposed houseboat community on the pier would be used to build a terminal building, café and dock to serve a pedestrian ferry link from Vancouver. Decreased municipal costs in independent infrastructure areas would benefit residents through tax breaks, refunds and service upgrades. A dedicated lane on School Road will link the waterfront area to the services of Upper Gibsons. The opportunities to run a passenger ferry or a shuttle bus will be made available to local residents who would then be responsible for assuring a minimum level of service and would be able to earn profits from the service. The specific nature of services is determined by citizens, rather than officials and corporations.

Many of the options presented in this section may be implemented gradually once the zoning and bylaw allowances have been put in place. Coordinated incremental growth can more exactly meet the demands of an increasing population. With our proposals, Gibsons can meet the future on its own terms, at its own pace.